

LPGA event to stay in Prattville until 2012

By Marty Roney • Montgomery Advertiser • September 13, 2010

PRATTVILLE — The Navistar LPGA Classic will stay in Prattville until 2012.

Daniel Ustian, president, CEO and chairman of Navistar International Corp., on Monday morning announced a two-year extension for the tournament. The classic, which brings 144 of the top professional women golfers in the world to town, will make its fourth appearance at the Capitol Hill golf course Oct. 4-10.

"Each year has been better than the last," Ustian said during the official media kickoff of the event Monday. "First, it's with the weather, and second it's with the caliber of golf. Last year, we had this 14-year-old girl leading the field on the second day by 10 strokes. That's amazing."

He was talking about Alexis Thompson, a teenage player from Georgia who set the world on fire during last year's tourney.

"The tournament was a great experience for me," the now 15-year-old Alexis said. "Everyone was so nice and welcoming last year. I'm really looking forward to coming back this year."

A study by the Prattville Area Chamber of Commerce shows last year's event created a \$7 million economic impact for the River Region. The estimated gallery total for last year's event was 48,000, with the last four days being tournament play days, said Jonathan Romeo, tournament director.

Any way you look at it, the tournament is good for the area, said Montgomery Mayor Todd Strange.

"There are going to be a lot of dollars spent in Prattville, a lot of dollars spent in Elmore County and a lot of dollars spent in Montgomery," he said. "This is truly a regional event, and even that will be an economic boost for all of us."

The ripples of the tournament will be felt statewide, said David Bronner, CEO of the Retirement Systems of Alabama. RSA built the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. Prattville's Capitol Hill is a stop on the trail.

"One of the primary reasons I founded the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail was to help increase economic development across Alabama and to bring more tourists to our state," he said.

Any day tickets for the tournament are \$10. Tickets can be purchased at www.navistarlpgaclassic.com or at the tournament.

People will see top-notch golf, Romeo said. Defending champion Lorena Ochoa retired earlier this year. Rankings put Jiyai Shin of South Korea as the top player on the tour, followed closely behind by Cristie Kerr, Yani Tseng and Suzann Pettersen. The top players have committed to the Navistar LPGA Classic, along with Michelle Wie, Paula Creamer, Natalie Gulbis, Morgan Pressel and Christina Kim, Romeo said.